

THE

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

R. F. W. ALLSTON,

GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA:

DELIVERED DECEMBER 11, 1856.

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A D D R E S S.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives :

In obedience to your summons, to assume the Executive office, I now appear before you to take the usual oath. Its comprehensive terms embrace the only pledge I have to give. Suffer me first, with profound respect to the representatives of the people, gratefully to acknowledge this token of the public confidence, and to express my sensibility of the honor which you have been pleased to bestow.

Aware that my election is owing more to your kind consideration of my long service in the General Assembly, than to any peculiar fitness or merit of my own; aware, too, that the office is invested with few prerogatives, and but little patronage, yet I accept it at your hands as a post of high honor and dignity. With sincere distrust, however, of my ability to meet your expectations, I hope I may be permitted to rely on the good will which you have thus exhibited, to judge me candidly, to advise me frankly, and to sustain me generously, throughout my official course. I pray God you may not be disappointed in your estimate of my powers, and that I may be enlightened and qualified for the high responsibility.

With less ardor in my nature,—with far less eloquence and ability to enforce my views,—I propose to pursue, generally, the like course of administration which has been so well illustrated by my distinguished predecessor—duly progressive, yet eminently conservative.

I propose to address myself, and to invite your attention, chiefly to the development and improvement of the internal resources of our cherished commonwealth, and also to cultivate, as far as good faith, frank and fair-dealing can effect such results, just relations and a good understanding with our sister States.

Among the most trying duties before me, may be mentioned those which are incident to the exercise of the pardoning power. The idea of being

impelled by a sense of duty to decline the clemency invoked in behalf of a condemned husband, or son, or brother, is painful to my nature, even in contemplation. Yet, education has taught me that it is contrary to order and good government to interfere with the due course of justice. To vindicate the majesty of the law is consistent with the interest of every good citizen—it will infringe the liberty of none. For this purpose courts are established, which administer the criminal law with justice—remembering mercy. Justice upon the criminal is often mercy to the community. The Chief Magistrate should require a full report of the facts from the court which tried the case, as a condition precedent to entertaining any petition against the execution of its decree.

With regard to our Federal relations, I would willingly be hopeful of the future. But the history of the present Congress, the forbidding aspects of New England, and the many repelling circumstances which mark the recent Federal election, taken in connection with their antecedents, constitute a solemn warning to the Southern country, which we cannot overlook, and must not fail to heed. God grant it may serve to draw the States affected nearer together in confidence and counsel!

The spirit which would peril the peace and union of the Confederacy, rather than witness the extension of domestic slavery into the Territories, is the same which succeeded twenty-eight years ago in imposing on the staple States the burden of a protective tariff. Strengthened and emboldened now by various successes, and embittered by the commingling with it of a reckless fanaticism, it must be rebuked, or the bond of union will be broken and destroyed.

To our Constitutional Union is justly to be ascribed the wonderful progress in prosperity and power of the United States. Abroad it is known only as *national*—the “American Union,”—and there is a tower of strength to the citizen, within the shadow of which his life and property are safe. At home, we recognize it as *Federal*—composed of independent States, and integral parts, each of which, as it enjoys the benefits derived from the terms of the Constitution, cannot escape accountability for the coexisting duties imposed thereby. Upon the observance of those terms, in their true spirit as to herself, it is the right and duty of the State to insist, as well as to see that due observance of the same is rendered on her own part. It is sad to perceive that the States of the Eastern and Northern section are diverging more and more from their ancient affection and common duty to the Southern and Southwestern States, thus nursing estrangement of feeling among their citizens towards us, and hostility to the institution (our birth-

right) which has constituted so material an element of their wealth, as well as of our happiness and prosperity.

At the time the Constitution was adopted, property in African slaves was held legalized and protected in a majority of the confederated States. Since the period of the admission of the five States which were organized in the Northwestern Territory ceded by Virginia, the number of States still holding such property was reduced to one-half of the Confederacy. Most of the other half or section deny their obligation to recognize this property and their duty in relation thereto toward their co-States where it is an institution.

Now, in order to preserve, in some measure, the power to protect the rights of the Southern States in this behalf, we must preserve the equilibrium between the two sections in at least one of the Federal Councils. That equilibrium in the Senate was disturbed by the irregular admission of California—it may be restored by the admission of Kansas.

Whenever it shall become the settled policy of the Federal Government, that States which adhere to the institution of domestic slavery shall no more be admitted into the Union, then the Southern States, unless their people shall have become utterly blind to their own interests and safety, making common cause for a common interest, will combine to throw off that government, or will prove themselves unworthy of a wise and brave ancestry, and regardless of their duty to posterity.

Just now the country rests in momentary calm, after the unhappy troubles in Kansas, and the exhausting excitement of a heated canvass for President and Vice President of the United States, an excitement pervading the whole land, which has betrayed, throughout the borders of New England, a fanatical bitterness of hostility to Southern institutions, which cannot fail in using the Southern people warmly in their vindication. Gratefully we have received as a heritage those institutions; wisely and discreetly we will enjoy and improve them, without quarreling with others (if they only let us alone) because they cannot view them as we do; and with the blessing of God, (keeping always in view our accountability to him,) faithfully will we transmit them to our children. We, of the States Rights school, have been identified in the late election with the Democratic party. That party has triumphed, and I sincerely sympathize in their triumph. Grateful should we be for this, as for all the least of God's blessings on our efforts in the right direction.

At a moment when defeat would have been destructive to the peace and order of our common country—when revolution and anarchy would have

been the consequence of a triumph to those whose motto seems to be "rule or ruin," the canvass has resulted as the people of this State desired, in the appointment of Electors favorable to our views—favorable to the election of a distinguished citizen of Pennsylvania, ripe in statesmanship, experienced and wise in diplomacy, sound in constitutional law, of honest and remarkable equanimity.

It is true, he is not familiar with Southern society, and knows not the people who so warmly sustained him; but I regard it as due to our own share in the late contest—to the common bond of union which still subsists—to the few persistent majorities, and the several respectable minorities in the North and East—to the fair promises and honest purposes of the President elect himself, to render to his administration a candid consideration and reasonable, generous support. So long as it shall prove able to resist the sinister influences which will be brought to bear upon it by those who possess the design and facility to combine against the interests of the plantation States, so long, I am persuaded, you will be unwilling to embarrass or obstruct its legitimate progress.

Maintaining firmly, however, the principles of State Rights, State equality, we will devote our energies to the increase of the moral power, the productive capital, and the commercial independence of the Commonwealth.

Let us do all that properly may be done to elevate the standard of education, and diffuse its light more widely.

Let us extend our borders by facilitating inland intercourse. Communicating already by means of the locomotive with the States North and South of us, let us turn with earnestness and energy towards the West, and carve for it a pathway through the Blue Ridge, the mountain barrier which alone obstructs its swift course to the Mississippi. Standing on our own loved soil of Carolina, which is fanned by the sea-breeze and open to the fruitful commerce of the ocean, let our people unite, from the seaboard to the mountains, in offering the hand of fellowship to our inland neighbors of Tennessee and Kentucky.

By doing our full share towards providing the facilities of travel, let us invite them to a closer communion with us at once—social, commercial, political.

These, gentlemen, are objects which I deem worthy of your attention, and well deserving the exercise of our best powers to attain them. In trustful submission to the will of Him who is the only source of wisdom and power, I turn to my duty, and will receive the oath of office from the lips of the Speaker.



